



OPENING OF THE 24TH GENERAL CHAPTER 2011

Dear Sisters, dear friends,

Today's celebration inaugurates the opening of the 24th General Chapter of our Congregation. In communion with all our Sisters here and everywhere, we stand and we respond "present" to God's call and to the cries of the poor at this time in our history. We answer "present" in order to receive from God the mission which is ours: "with one heart and one passion, let us put our hand to the work of Resurrection." Humbly, we accept the responsibility, which is ours, so that Basile Moreau's legacy bears fruit in the Church and in today's world.

This Chapter is our "YES" to the future, a future that God wishes to build with us, regardless of the scarcity of our resources, and also in spite of our cracked and worn out jars. On the threshold of this assembly, once again, Jesus himself greets us with these words: "If only you knew God's gift! If only you could recognize who is calling you forth to help quench his thirst and the thirst of the world, you, yourselves, would be asking for water to quench your thirst and the thirst of humanity. If only you knew God's gift, you would soon forget the intensity of the noonday sun, the depth of the well, the pail to draw water, to receive God's gratuitous gift."

Blessed are you, called to live this Chapter! Happy are we to be part of this unique gathering of July 2011, to be chosen by God to receive the promises of the next six years of world history and Holy Cross history in this world. Blessed are we to have been chosen by God who wishes to convince us, once more, that our miseries crying for life, our thirst searching for living water does not mean in the least that God's well has run dry. Happy are we to live this rendezvous with history where God wants to unburden us of our sterile doubts, of our lukewarm attitudes, of our resignations, of our paralyzing hopelessness. God is simply there to reiterate his love for us and that this love awaits us "everywhere", not only in those places once reserved for the encounter: the mountain or the temple...but everywhere, in spirit and in truth. God awaits us to unburden us of our unworthiness, of our inabilities in order to fashion us into disciples according to his own heart through an abundance of grace. What a liberating revelation! Blessed are we who are called to announce this good news to the whole Congregation and to our world!

This Chapter is our "*Yes to God's gift*". It is a "yes" filled with the confidence and the availability of those who know that "All things come from God, all things are in God and all things are for God." God, to whom all things belong and from whom all creation receives its breath of life, chooses to need us and to associate us to the sharing of His abundant life. All that is asked of us is simply that we accept this gift, that we allow it to spring forth within us as a source of life to be shared as an overflow of that same love and to invite the persons of all our "Samaritans" to journey toward a LIFE of abundance. Through Jesus Christ, God invites us to move into areas that seem impossible to us but that are made possible through God's own power. However, we need to collaborate in the Divine Plan by being accountable to our world of the hope that lives within us. Perhaps, we will see a people fully alive, standing up and journeying together toward the Source where they will live the encounter and experience life to its fullest dimension.

This Chapter is our "*Yes to communion*". Aware that we form one single Holy Cross family, whether we are from Canada, Haiti, Mali, Peru, Burkina Faso, the United States,

Italy or Chile...all of us are living the Chapter, whether we are young or elderly, whether we are here, elsewhere or in Pierrefonds. All of us are responsible for the unfolding of the gift of Holy Cross. In order to promote this participation and this communion, 'a road map' of the daily activities of the Chapter will be distributed to each one as we leave the chapel. The messages sent by the regions or by the larger communities and also the regular communications that will come from the Chapter for each sister are the chosen means to keep each and everyone of us in solidarity and fully responsible for the mission of the Congregation before God and before the people of God to whom we are sent.

Furthermore, beyond our small Congregation, we belong to something greater than the links among ourselves. By our connection to all creation, we are members of a single planetary family, of a great cosmic entity. We are not living this Chapter only for ourselves. We are living this chapter in the name of a people waiting for "the good news", ready to journey toward the Source, if someone is willing to indicate the path to follow. We are in Chapter because *"of the anxious longing of all creation waiting eagerly for the revealing of the children of God... (we are called) to take part in the freedom and the glory of the children of God...(and because) the whole creation groans and suffers the pain of childbirth."* (Romans 8, 19; 22) The gift of God will bear fruit only if we are able to communicate this gift and be in readiness to receive it anew, enriched, ready to flow freely in order to accomplish all of God's promises. Blessed are we, forever challenged to go beyond our boundaries, to widen the dimensions of our heart to the breath and width of the universe, to pool all our efforts, to live with one heart and one passion. Happy are we if our response to this call is a committed YES, for the Kingdom of God is near.

With this Chapter, the Kingdom of God is near in order to transform, to resurrect, to liberate and to make all things new. Will we allow the Kingdom of God to burst forth into our reality, to waken within us the gift of women disciples called to be mystics and prophets, at the service of life, at the service of grace, at the service of God's blessings the Church and today's world.*If we only knew God's gift...*

Last February, through the Circular Letter #3, according to the norms established by the Rules and Constitutions of the Congregation you were all officially called forth to enter into the Chapter process. On this 5th day of July 2011, I declare open the 24th General Chapter of the Sisters of Holy Cross.

To all those who will be in Pierrefonds, mandated by their Sisters and by the General Administration, I wish a fruitful Chapter. May the Chapter be also beneficial to all the Sisters of our Congregation, no matter where you may be and may you live perfect communion in God! Once more, let us invoke the Spirit, Creative Breath, always at work in our world, and ready to burst forth in all those places where life is yearning for living water and to breathe into us an abundance of NEW LIFE for the greater glory of God and for the joy of our world.

Kesta Occident, csc

July 5th, 2011